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Expressing care in narratives about occupations

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Abstract

Introduction. Engagement in occupations impacts on well-being, but this relationship needs to be better understood by occupational therapists. A focus on the meanings of occupations, rather than their purpose, might help further this understanding. Being meaningful, an occupation enables the individual to participate in society in a way that reflects personal and societal values. This paper explores how people can express personal values and caring in the narratives that they tell about leisure occupations.

Method. 17 serious leisure enthusiasts were interviewed and encouraged to talk about their chosen occupation. Narratives were extracted from the transcripts and analysed, giving attention to content, structure and interaction. Those narratives that appeared to have a meaning associated with caring were examined further in order to establish the types of caring that they revealed.

Findings. 31 narratives were found to have a meaning associated with values or caring, relating either to a moral struggle, caring close to home or caring further afield. **Conclusion.** For some individuals, the meaningfulness of their leisure occupations lies, in part, in using them as a vehicle to express care towards the self, towards others or towards the environment. This has implications for the uses of occupations in therapy.

Introduction

That engagement in occupation contributes to well-being is a central tenet in the foundational knowledge-base for the practice of occupational therapy (Wilcock 2006). Occupations are understood to have both meaning and purpose for the individual, and, whilst occupational therapy practice is often structured around purpose and function, it has been argued that the relationship between occupation and well-being might be better understood through a focus on subjective experience and meaning (Persson 2001, Hammell 2004, Hammell 2009). If the meanings of occupations can be better understood, then so might their therapeutic potential. This paper focuses on the idea that occupations become meaningful, for some people, as a vehicle for caring, thus playing a role in the well-being of self, and others in society.

Meaningful occupation, identity and well-being.

A focus on *meaning* means that we can better understand the individual uniqueness of occupational engagement, and yet, as Hammell argues (2004, 2009), this is a topic requiring fuller exploration by occupational therapists. Each occupation has societal, as well as personal, meaning. The relationship between the meanings of personal action and societal context is, indeed, fundamental in the construction of identity (Christiansen 1999), defined by Hewitt as ‘the person’s location in social life’ (1994, p111). This is one of the concepts underpinning symbolic interactionism (Blumer 1969) which argues that actions are symbolic in society. The meanings of occupations are created and shared within society and understood by individuals when they engage in these occupations. What we do helps us to construct who we are, in the way that we

experience ourselves (personal identity), and in the way that we present ourselves to others (social identity).

Human action and meaning-making are closely associated, being organised by the individual in a narrative form (Bruner 1990). People make sense of their actions (and occupations) by framing them in their own life-narratives, and within the wider socio-cultural context.

The moral self and occupation

For the occupational therapist, the concern for the promotion of well-being for each individual must be associated with an understanding of the construction and expression of an identity through which the individual can participate in society successfully and with satisfaction. Because occupations are borne out of and embedded in society, they connect people to their own culture (Hocking, Wright-St. Clair et al. 2002, Unruh 2004). When people reflect on their actions in the world they try to make sense of them in relation to how they might be viewed in relation to societal standards and norms, and what is viewed as 'good' or 'bad, (Christiansen 1999, Crossley 2000). Thus an occupation might be meaningful in that it helps to express a moral positioning in society in relation to the self and to others. Whilst occupational therapists may have given some thought to an ethic of care in relation to practitioners of the profession (e.g. Taylor 1995, Wright-St Clair 2001) literature in other disciplines is more fruitful in relation to how everyday human activities may convey an ethic of care (e.g. Green 1998, Rojek 2005). The purpose-based sorting of occupations, within occupational therapy, into the categories of leisure, productivity and self-care may well have caused those occupations related to meanings of belonging and interconnectedness to be neglected (Hammell 2009).

That occupational behaviour might relate to caring is not completely neglected in the occupational therapy literature, in that ‘self-care’ is a common purpose-based category of occupations (Creek 2003). In these cases self-caring tends to be regarded as a function, rather than an expression of values. In contrast, some authors have given attention to the relationship between occupation and caring in relation to the common good (Peloquin 2005, Whiteford 2007).

The meaning and purpose of an occupation are both likely to be reflections of societal values, for as Polkinghorne posits “within the life narrative, episodes of practical activity are integrated with moral and ethical motives” (1991, p143). Further, it has been suggested that engagement in occupations that allow the enactment of one’s values (occupational integrity) can enhance well-being (Pentland and McColl 2008), and specifically, eudaimonic well-being¹ (Hayward and Taylor 2011). It is important, because of the potential benefits for the individual and society, for occupational therapists to understand better the ways in which occupations can allow the expression of care and contribution.

In a recent study (XXXX 2013), a framework was proposed which offered a conceptualisation of how occupation contributes to the construction of identity. It was suggested that one facet of the framework is *morality*. Individuals, when telling of their engagement in an occupation might place emphasis on the personal meaningfulness that the occupation has in relation to morality or caring, in order to construct a particular and unique identity. This paper explores further how narratives allow the individual to emphasise personal values and caring as meanings that a leisure occupation can hold.

¹ “when people’s life activities are most congruent or meshing with deeply held values and are holistically or fully engaged” (Ryan & Deci, 2001)

Method

Symbolic interactionism acknowledges the ability of people to reflect on their own actions, their purpose and their meaning (Hewitt 1994) and so qualitative data was gathered in research interviews, then subjected to narrative analysis. It is normal in everyday conversation for people to tell small stories, to illustrate a point that they are making. By interpreting the meanings of these small stories, some access can be gained to the meanings that people attribute to their occupations. A small story, or narrative, is defined here as a small, self-contained unit of discourse recounting some action and a plot. The action occurs over time, and is carried out by individuals who initiate or respond to events (Mattingly & Lawlor 2000). A focus on this type of short narrative is in contrast to those narrative studies which focus on life stories, or large, life-changing events (e.g. Braveman & Helfrich 2001, Gould et al 2005).

When telling short narratives, the speaker constructs the story knowing that the listener is forming an impression as she or he speaks. The narrative is created with this in mind, as a preferred representation of the self to the audience (Goffman 1959). A narrative will thus have a jointly constructed meaning within the specific socio-cultural context in which it is told. Given this social constructionist perspective it was appropriate, throughout the research, to remain reflexive and transparent in relation to the influence that I had on the interviewees and the ways in which meanings could be co-constructed (Fontana and Frey 2003). In any research it is important for the researcher to be consciously aware of her / his own influence on the interpretation and analysis of data. The processes of interviewing, transcription, identifying the beginnings and ends of the narratives, selecting narratives for analysis, the interpretations of meanings and, later, the ways in which a sense was made of the

analysis were all subject to researcher influence (Riessman 1993). Systematic checking, reflective diary-keeping, supervision and transparency of decision-making served to counterbalance such influences in this study.

The data used here have been taken from a larger study in which 17 individuals were interviewed about their leisure activities in order to explore the relationship between identity and occupation. Additional detail about the original study can be found in XXXX (2013). Approval for the research was granted by a university ethics committee.

Participants

Each participant was a leisure enthusiast committed to ‘serious leisure’ (Stebbins 1996). People who engage in these types of occupation invest considerable amounts of time, energy and other resources in them, and so might be expected to imbue them with significant meaning.

The participants were members of the public, contacted through ‘gatekeepers’ who had been asked if they knew anyone fitting the criteria for serious leisure as defined by Stebbins (1996). Every effort was made to select a heterogeneous sample, comprised of men and women from a range of ages, socio-economic and ethnic backgrounds. Participants’ occupations were substituted for their names (such as The Mountain-Biker) for the purpose of anonymity.

The leisure enthusiasts introduced

The participants engaged in a range of leisure occupations that were active, sedentary, creative, sporting, group and solitary, and included, for example, choral singing, bird-watching, gym-membership and canoeing. Their ages ranged from 16 (the Soul-

Singer) to 71 (the Yoga-Practitioner). Some were married, some single, some had children and some did not. Education levels ranged from those who left school in their teens to one person who had a doctorate. Most had employment, but one was retired and one a student. The majority described themselves as white British, whilst there were also black British, Jamaican and Bangladeshi participants. There was heterogeneity in the sample, but what they had in common was that their lives were dominated by the pursuit of a particular leisure occupation. This was evident in their narratives, and also in the physical artefacts that I observed in their homes. The Railwayman, for example, had a model train on the mantelpiece, photos of himself in period uniforms, including one with a famous fellow-enthusiast, also train lamps and pictures. In his enthusiasm he spoke of railway history, of engineering, selling tickets and doing voluntary work as a guard. Space does not permit rich descriptions of each participant; I offer the Railwayman as an exemplar.

Data Collection

Interviews lasted between 30 and 60 minutes, using a relatively unstructured interviewing approach which promoted a relaxed atmosphere, and enable meaning to be made in the interaction between interviewer and interviewee. Participants were encouraged to tell narratives about incidents that had arisen in the course of pursuing the occupation. Interviews were carried out, in all but two cases (my home and the participant's office), in the participants' own homes and were audio-recorded.

Analysis

The interviews were transcribed verbatim, without 'cleaning up' non-lexical utterances, hesitations and other discourse markers (Riessman 1993), these being

regarded as clues to self-presentation and the expression of meaning. 78 narratives were extracted from the 17 interview transcripts, chosen because they had a strong narrative form, being clear, self-contained units of discourse recounting some action.

Dramaturgical and sociolinguistic approaches to narrative analysis were used, to focus on meaning. Attention was also given to the meanings conveyed in the narratives (Mishler 1986) by examining:

- Narrative content (what was said)
- Narrative form and structure (how it was said)
- Interaction with the audience / interviewer (how the narrative was performed)

The method of analysis was drawn from the works of Labov and Waletzky (1966), Gee (1986) and Agar and Hobbs (1982), enabling meaning to be interpreted within the context of the interview, and within a wider societal context. This was a complex synthesis of compatible approaches which enabled a systematic approach to analysis. Particular attention was given to understanding meaning through the rhythm and poetic structuring of the narratives, by laying them out in lines and stanzas as suggested by Gee (1986). Crepeau (2000) used a similar combination of approaches in an analysis of a multidisciplinary team's use of stories to build an image of a patient. Further detail of the analysis methods can be found elsewhere (XXXX 2013).

Narratives which were particularly full of meaning and emotion often had a strong poetic form, powerful imagery, the use of dramatic devices such as building suspense, or variations in voice volume and pitch and the use of powerful words. When an emotional narrative is told, its meaning is usually related to something that the narrator cares about. A narrative can reveal something about that person's moral

values and ethics as they ““relive” moments of their past, re-entering the rich emotional landscape of powerful experiences.” (Mattingly and Lawlor 2000, p5). Each of the 78 narratives was analysed in order to understand what meanings the participants were associating with their occupation, and which particular meanings were being given emphasis.

The analyses were not taken back to the participants for validation. This decision was based on the perspective that each interview was a unique, contextually specific construction, and that the analysis is acknowledged as the researcher’s own. All participants were offered a short summary of the research.

Findings

The narrative analyses were used to examine how the meanings of the occupations were conveyed in the narratives.. By searching for similarities and differences, the meanings could be grouped into clusters. A framework was thus inductively formulated which represented various facets of identity as it relates to being occupied, and one of these facets involved the expression of moral values. This moral aspect of identity will be discussed here.

31 narratives were interpreted as having a meaning primarily concerned with presenting a moral aspect of identity. This was not surprising; when representing themselves and their actions to others, people will often use this as an opportunity to establish what they consider to be right or wrong. This is usually done by direct or indirect comment, or by comparing the self with others. Seven main meanings associated with morality, or values, were identified: loyalty, fulfilling obligations,

helping others, social concerns, caring for the self, pondering selfishness and the influence of external moral authorities. These are presented below under three headings: ‘moral struggles’, ‘caring close to home’ and ‘caring further afield’. Illustrations will be provided by sections of narrative, which will enable the reader to see how action, context, the speaker’s evaluation, narrative structure and dramatic devices helped to create meaning. Transcription conventions used in this study are shown in Appendix 1. The first person is used as appropriate to emphasise the role of the researcher as audience to, and thus co-creator of, the narratives.

Moral struggles

When asked about their leisure lives participants often talked about loyalties, obligations, conflicts and struggles associated with their moral positioning. Several people pondered whether their leisure occupation led them, or others, to be selfish, pulling them away from their families or other duties. It is not uncommon for a group of individuals sharing the same leisure interest to have shared norms and values which may conflict with those of the wider community (Baldwin and Norris 1999). When an individual’s own moral position is compromised, strong emotions can be aroused and these were evident in some of the leisure narratives. This was amusingly illustrated in a narrative told by the Gym-member, when she described her childhood love of sport.

*it’s so funny,
because I was brought up in church ((laughs))
we were always told, you know,
‘don’t show your knickers’*

*So, but you had to wear a gym skirt
with navy-blue knickers underneath
so when I was running ((Interviewer: little gasp of realisation))
I was always like this ((gestures holding skirt down over legs))
and I never won a race! ((both laugh))
and I always came second*

*and my teacher said
'if you let go of your skirt,
you'll win a race, eventually!'
and I said 'I can't, I'll show my knickers' ((laughs))
but one time this girl kept on beating
I wanted – I'd just had enough*

*I went 'zang'
and I let it go
and I beat her
so since then,
it's all been out there! ((laughs a lot))*

The Gym-member

We giggled like schoolgirls as the story was told, yet the conflict, between the little girl's wish to win, and the teachings of her Church appeared to have been a serious matter at the time. The full meaning of the narrative is revealed in the emotional and dramatic way in which it is delivered (and received by the audience). This narrative is an illustration that the values into which we are socialised by family and community may be challenged by the occupations in which we engage. In this instance, the Gym-member's moral position had to find a new location, somewhere between the external moral authority of the Church and her own personal judgement. Societal values might be adapted, adopted or rejected in our actions and the way in which we tell of them (Mishler 1999).

Caring close to home

The meanings of some of the narratives showed that some people considered it right to care for themselves or for close friends, family and animals. Caring for the self includes looking after one's health. In the narrative extract below the Horse-rider was

concerned about her stress levels (and those of her horse). She described a critical occasion when she decided to stop entering show-jumping events.

*and as soon as you go in the ring,
of course, they ring a bell,
and there's a loud-speaker that introduces you*

*and I could feel him tense up
and he refused three times
and we were eliminated*

*and I thought 'he's not enjoying this –
and I'm not enjoying this bit'
I mean to be honest, to be eliminated wasn't nice
I thought 'this is probably telling me something,
I should be listening'
and that's when I decided it was enough*

I thought – 'I don't need to put myself through this'

The Horse-rider

The event itself is told in the first two stanzas. She uses some dramatic devices to build the tension, for example she uses the second person singular in the first stanza, to help draw the audience in, and she uses short, sharp lines in the second stanza to maximise impact. The second two stanzas show us the Horse-rider's sense-making; her evaluation of what happened. She cares enough about herself, and her horse's well-being, to give up an occupation which has previously absorbed considerable commitment. People might take up, or give up, an occupation in order to enhance well-being. Two other participants, the Gym-member and the Yoga-practitioner, both told narratives about the events leading up to their decisions to engage in health-enhancing occupations.

Caring may also be focused on family, friends and pets. Participants told narratives, for example, about the nurturing of children through shared occupations (the Fisherman and the Gym-member) and ways in which a dog was made healthy and happy (the Dog-trainer). The Bridge-player, with his bridge partner of 28 years, had played internationally. He had known his wife, Mary², for a shorter time. He told this short narrative, following a question about his intense relationship with bridge, and why he had given it up for several years.

'cos in actual fact when Mary was pregnant

*I was actually at a bridge evening
when she phoned from the hospital
and said 'I'm giving birth, the head's showing,
are you turning up, or what?'*

I *I can't ask – did you turn up?*

BP *yes, I did,
I did actually say 'I'm going'
and I left the match*

The Bridge-player

Unlike the Horse-rider, the Bridge-player does not provide the audience with reasons for his actions. The meaning of this narrative must be constructed and understood from subtle nuances. The word 'actually' can be interpreted here to mean 'and then I did something out of the ordinary'. We might not have expected him to be playing bridge while his wife was in labour, and his bridge-playing companions might not have expected him to leave his beloved game for anything! He appears to have surprised himself by shifting his loyalty away from bridge towards his wife and new child not just on this occasion, but for several years afterwards also (which was what

² All names of people and places have been changed

my original question had been about). This is, essentially, a morality tale about a man whose leisure occupation has become less important because of other, more culturally conventional, priorities.

Caring further afield

Superficially leisure is about enjoyment, but the research participants illustrated that serious leisure is about much more than this. Narratives were told which showed that leisure occupations are used to care for the environment, for the community, for the next generation, for disadvantaged groups and for history and heritage. Several participants told about the importance of passing their skills and interests on to the next generation. The Horn-player, for example, told a narrative about the anticipated future, when he would teach young people to play music, just as he had been taught through the generosity of others. For others, sharing one's leisure interest is a way of helping others towards a better lifestyle. The Canoeist described how she saw her leisure occupation as a way to empower young black women in a poor inner-city area.

*the organisation - they identified a need
to specialise in community outdoor activities for girls
they started advertising that as a project.
So, based in Midtown,
the core group that I was working with had a remit,
both ways really,
being multi-cultural and for women*

The Canoeist

She offered other narratives that described some adventures that she had had with the young black girls of Midtown and the part she had played in them. By providing new experiences and being a positive role-model the Canoeist used her leisure occupation

politically, to bring about change. The way she presented the narrative, and its meaning, showed that she was doing this consciously. Leisure, then, is not just about hedonistic pleasure, it can be about altruistic intention.

The Railwayman's hobby of steam railway preservation is inextricably tied up with a point in British transport history in the 1960s, when the railways were modernised, with the closure of many local railway lines and the withdrawal of steam trains from the railway stock. The public reaction to these changes provides part of the backdrop to this narrative.

*.... 1968, or leading up to 1968 Dr Beeching's axe fell
and the problem with that was that
not so much that the railways were going to be modernised
which was fantastic, that was great, because it needed it*

*the problem was that,
when the steam engines
these monstrosities that had ruled the railways for so long
when the axe fell, steam engines went for scrap*

*and there was very much er, er a, shall I say, an unwritten .. edict
that other than stuff that went to the National Railway Museum,
a lot of stuff was not to be sold to Joe Bloggs, Fred, Harry and this that and
the other*

(later in the interview)

*and I'm sure that the railway is for the people,
it's part of our heritage
it's going to be something that people are going to be so proud of –
that by hook or by crook,
they are so proud that that is still there,
that is part of my county,
that is part of British history, you know
that you know, you think that that is worth doing,
that is worth fighting for*

The Railwayman

It is clear that, for the Railwayman, his hobby is linked to the preservation of heritage. There is something in what he says, also, about the 'man-on-the-street' taking on authority and winning a moral victory. From a dramaturgical perspective, the last stanza is delivered like a rousing battle-cry. The drama of this narrative is made more effective by the use of metaphor. Dr Beeching's axe falling, and the monstrosities that ruled the railways, evoke images of mightiness and destruction, which convey the Railwayman's values. His occupation serves to give him pleasure, but it is also about a belief in serving the wider public.

Other people told narratives about giving something to the local community. This might be done by staging performances such as dog-agility displays, choir or band performances, giving pleasure to others. This sharing of one's hobby carries responsibility and commitment as the Amateur Operatic performer illustrates here.

*I actually chipped a bone one year,
in the foot,
and I was doing the lead, erm,*

*and when I were backstage
the pain was absolutely ridiculous,
horrendous,
but the minute you got on stage,
it just seemed to go,*

*you just seem to forget about it,
and you do what you have to do –
you do your dancing,
you do your speaking,
you do your talking*

*and as soon as you got back –
I went 'ahhhhh'
I'd chipped a bone in my foot,
I'd been to x-ray,
and there's not a lot they could do
they couldn't strap my foot or anything.*

So yes, I've been where I've been in pain,

*but you just carry on,
the show must go on*

The Amateur Operatic performer

The last line, ‘the show must go on’, is of particular interest. For many people this is evocative of a particular genre of Hollywood movies in which the acting troupe manages to deliver the show, despite all obstacles. This is, of course, what this narrative is about. Despite her pain, she went on stage. The analysis shows an underlying meaning in this narrative, that, if your leisure occupation involves a commitment to others (members of the public or others in your hobby community) then you have an obligation to see the commitment through. It is a moral decision. Others should not be let down or disappointed.

As well as using leisure to contribute to the community, participants told of using a hobby to help to improve the environment. The Bird-watcher was a diffident man who had left school at 16. Having given accounts of data collecting and challenging committee work for the British Trust for Ornithology, he told this short and hypothetical narrative to explain his enthusiasm for the study and protection of birds:

*For me, that's the only bad bit of bird watching,
the fact that I feel it's a right thing to do –
not just bird watching, but the environment as well,
caring about the environment, er,*

*and other people . . .not that they don't care,
but they're not tuned into it.*

*Can only say - you've got the rarest bird in the world,
on a winter's morning,
singing next to a bus-stop full of people,
and they wouldn't know –
they wouldn't even hear it –
they wouldn't be able to define what it were,*

because they wouldn't even hear it singing . . .

*that's always struck me as – not – it's sad,
I feel sorry for them*

Bird-watcher

The Bird-watcher expresses not only his care for the natural environment, but also for his fellow citizens who might get more out of life if they tuned in to bird-song.

Discussion

Occupations are comprised of actions that have symbolic meaning for the individual and for society, including whether those actions are considered to be 'right' or 'wrong'. The examples given above provide illustrations of the ways in which people may present the moral concerns when telling narratives about their occupations.

Values and moral principles were displayed as the participants spoke, often with emotion and drama, about loyalty, obligations, troubled consciences, helping others and social concerns. There is an argument here that, although these narratives were about leisure occupations, in fact they could have equally been about other categories of occupation, such as work or self-care, in which the same values and principles might have emerged.

These emotional narratives serve as an illustration that engagement in occupation involves choices with moral implications. Two concepts, discussed below, provide a useful basis for the consideration of this idea, within occupational therapy and occupational science.

Ethic of care

People have some consciousness that their occupational choices have consequences, that the body and mind are vulnerable to aging and damage, and that there are power imbalances in society. Such choices thus enable people to express an ethic of care (Rojek 2005). This idea can be expanded to encompass all occupations in which choices are made, although leisure is an interesting case because it is normally associated with hedonism. The findings of this research give some evidence that people use leisure occupations to care for themselves, for others and the environment. Leisure is not always about the pursuit of hedonistic pleasure; short-term pleasure might be sacrificed for longer-term eudaimonic well-being (Hayward and Taylor 2011), based on action congruous with values and the greater good. That occupations can be used to care for the self is important in relation to the growing interest of occupational therapists in health promotion and preventative interventions. The occupational therapist can be influential in helping people to make life-enhancing choices, although it is noted from this research that people are often able to act as their own therapists in this regard, planning therapeutic occupations for themselves. Caring for one's own well-being goes beyond care of the body. The creation and maintenance of well-being is also associated with care of the mind, care of others and care of relationships.

Community well-being

The participants in this research were often very aware of their engagement with others in society and the contributions they could make to their well-being. This understanding made the occupations meaningful. Through their occupations people

demonstrated what has been called active citizenship, contributing to empowerment, social inclusion and environmental husbandry (Rojek 2005).

The relationship between occupation and well-being may reach beyond the individual. Occupational engagement by individuals and by communities may have an impact on the well-being of the individual, the community and the environment in which that individual lives, works and plays. As others have noted, occupation can involve civic engagement (Whiteford 2007) and active protection of the environment (Peloquin 2005).

In the study described here, the Choral-singer, the Dog-trainer, the Horn-player and the Amateur Operatic performer, through their performances, hoped to contribute to the well-being of the community, while other individuals shared their leisure occupations with young people, or tried to get others involved. Meanwhile, the Railwayman and the Bird-watcher use their hobbies to help to secure the physical and natural environment for the future. Arai and Pedlar (2003) have written about their concern that leisure has become increasingly influenced by consumerism and individualism, leading to people giving little thought to the consequences of their actions in relation to the wider society and the physical environment. These authors have advocated the further development of civic engagement by the promotion of participation in community activities. There is a link here to the idea of social capital – that individuals can give and receive into and from social networks, which offer support for well-being (Putnam 2000). There is also a link to the work of the occupational therapist. There is scope here for further research designed to explore the ways in which occupational engagement contributes to the well-being of the individual, others and the wider community.

This is a small-scale study that allowed in-depth understanding of the narratives of a small number of people. No argument is made that the sample was statistically representative of a particular wider population, but it can be argued that the theoretical links between narratives, meanings and occupations that have been presented would enable extrapolation to a wider population, and also to occupations other than those classed as leisure.

Conclusion

When engaging in leisure occupations, or when telling narratives about them people can reveal something of their moral values. The occupations that people engage in have meanings associated with what is valued and what is judged to be right or wrong, personally, and societally.

The occupational therapist who encourages clients to tell narratives about their occupations (new or old) and who listens attentively, can gain access to many clues about motivations and what is valued. Such clues can only enhance the power of occupation as therapy. This has implications for intervention and also for the relationship between individual and community occupations and individual and community well-being. In particular, the ways in which the individual cares for the self and for others, and the ways in which the individual relates to societal values are of interest. By giving attention to the moral positioning of the individual the occupational therapist can better understand the motives that drive people to engage in particular occupations, their sense of personal identity and the way that they present their identity socially to others.

These things are of interest, particularly with regard to planning interventions which are designed for the benefit of the well-being of the individual. This research also

supports the idea that there is considerable potential to develop practice based on a positive relationship between the occupations of individuals and groups, and the well-being of communities and the physical environment. A focus on the moral meanings of occupational behaviour might make the world a better place.

Appendix 1

Transcription conventions key:

I	Denotes a comment by the interviewer
___	Underlining, when a word or phrase is emphasised
-	Hyphen - a cut off word or sentence or self interruption
....	Pause
(())	Indicates something non-speech e.g. ((laughs))

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Key Findings:

- Occupations can have meaningfulness in relation to values and caring for some people.
- Occupations can enable people to express care for self, others and the environment.

What the study has added:

This study helps occupational therapists to better understand the therapeutic potential of occupations, which can help people to express their values in caring for self, others and the environment.